

SELECTIONS FROM THE MAIL

PROF. TOY'S SCHOLARSHIP ASSAILED.
A STUDENT WHO CONTROVERTS HIS STATEMENTS AS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT'S AUTHENTICITY.

To the Editor of the Tribune.

Sir: In your issue of the 9th inst., under the caption "Israelitish Legends," appeared the partial report of a lecture by Professor Crawford Howell Toy, of Harvard University, being the first of three lectures on "The Latest Results of the Higher Biblical Criticism." Besides the weight of his name and official connection, Professor Toy is introduced to the readers of The Tribune as one who has long been acknowledged as an expert on matters touching the history of Biblical nations as well as upon the study of theology. In these matters his reputation is international.

Having read, in the last few years, a large number of books, beginning with that of Professor Robertson Smith, upon the interesting question of the authenticity of the Old Testament Scripture, not in any sense as a partisan, but with a sincere desire to get at the truth by patient investigation, the writer felt a supreme satisfaction on reading The Tribune's announcement. "At last," he thought, "A Daniel has come to judgment! Now we shall have light and a satisfactory solution of the great theological question vexata of the age. Doubtless 'all wisdom will die' with this 'expert' of international reputation, and thrice fortunate is he who is privileged to hear the conclusion of the whole matter."

The Tribune introduction says: "The Professor spoke in part as follows: etc. So that, so far as it goes, it is fair to assume the report to be textual, and to that extent it becomes a fair subject of public remark. The writer has waited to see some review of the assertions made by the learned 'expert' from competent scholars, but, disappointed in this respect, with much reluctance and a consciousness of his own deficiencies, ventures, as a mere layman, to offer some observations to you readers upon the lecture of April 8.

In discussing a question of such vital importance to millions of the human family who have not been favored with the opportunity of pursuing a curriculum in Harvardsian theology, one naturally looks for proofs that will warrant one in laying aside preconceived opinions, or even of one you choose) adopted prepossessions which differ toto cœlo, to warrant so radical a change. But, strange to say, in deciding ex cathedra, the question before him, and in endeavoring to lead his audience to the same conclusions, not a scintilla of proof is offered. The whole scope of the lecture is a series of assertions and negations, vastly qualified, at that. It is claimed that "the story of the Flood and kindred tales form an interesting collection of legends and myths"; that "little of Genesis can be accepted as history"; that one of the reasons why the abode in Egypt and the exodus cannot be regarded as historical facts is "that in the Egyptian records that have been thus far discovered there is no reference to these occurrences, so that this portion of the Old Testament must be regarded as a reflection of a subsequent period." etc.

But to continue quotations with a decent respect to your limitations of space is impracticable. It is only necessary to say that the absence of the corroboration of Israelitish history by the Egyptian records thus far found (were that the fault would be no proof that history was not what the Old Testament gives us). The Egyptian records, so far as discovered and deciphered, as well as the Babylonian cylinders, in no instance antagonize the statements of the Old Testament, but, on the contrary, in countless instances, where they refer to corresponding events, confirm them. That accomplished scholar and Egyptologist, Professor A. H. Sayce, in his recent work, "The Exports of the Hebrews and Herodotus," points out coincidences and confirmations between the two records all the way from Abraham to the latest date of the Hebrew Scriptures; and who can say what further essential corroborations have been lost in the destruction of the Alexandrian Library of 400,000 volumes about 30 B. C., or of the Egyptian tablets in the earlier days of "chance finds"? Before the key to their interpretation was discovered in the Rosetta stone, and after that until a systematic plan of excavations was adopted, and the fellahs of Egypt had learned that such finds had a marketable value?

But we are not wholly left to surmise. Professor Toy refers to the "tablets of Amarna, found nine years ago and inscribed about 1500 years B. C." as "not containing a word of the Israelitish history as found in the earlier books of the Old Testament." Now, Professor Sayce, Chapter II, describes this find at Tel-el-Amarna in 1887. He says that about three hundred tablets were discovered in the ruins of the Foreign Office, but that no one on the spot appreciated their value, and many of them were injured or destroyed before they fell into European hands, and he accounts for the distribution and present place of deposit of the most those that were recovered. But even from these scanty relics many confirmations of Scripture history are obtained; and, after all, why should we look for an elaborate history of a nation of slaves in the archives of the Egyptian Foreign Office? Professor Sayce describes the Mosiac era as one of intense literary activity in Egypt, Babylonia, and Canaan—indeed, in every part of the Near East. The tablet that was called Kirjath-Serah—the city of books—and hopes are entertained that if its site be ever discovered, great additions will be made to our present scanty and fragmentary knowledge, touting us back to the Semitic period before and possibly after the Israelitish conquest.

The evidence above given, or rather referred to, of the corroborative of Israelitish history is only material, but the lies beyond, is perhaps parallel with it, another line of argument in support of the Old Testament Scriptures, which pace Professor Toy, is exhaustive and convincing to the dispassionate reader. This is the line of historical appreciation. This is found in a volume entitled "Les Mosaïcs" recently published in London, by the Harvard professor appears not to have seen, or else presumed that it was not what he wanted. In a symposium of articles written by four of the most eminent British professors of Hebrew, many of them "experts" in Assyrian and Egyptian lore, embracing such names as Rawlinson, Girdlestone, Freeman, Lucas, and others, the author of this article thus brought to light is equal in bulk to half the Pentateuch.

It is clear that these letters are the most important records ever found in connection with the Bible, and that they confirm the historical portions of the Book of Joshua."

On referring to the above-mentioned tablets found at Tel-el-Amarna, quoted from Major Conder, a recognized authority in Egyptian, follows: "The most important contribution thus brought to light is equal in bulk to half the Pentateuch. It is clear that these letters are the most important records ever found in connection with the Bible, and that they confirm the historical portions of the Book of Joshua."

In conclusion, it may not be impudent to ask whether Harvard University is fulfilling the purpose of its great institution in teaching of its professors, as taught by one of its professors, a doctrine subversive of the very foundations of the Christian religion, if for the Old Testament Scriptures are only an agreed-upon fiction of a negligible, and even imaginary, nature of a past life.

Steamer *Old Dominion*, Blakeman, Norfolk and New-Port News, with miss and passengers to the old Dominion Steamship Line, N. J., April 23. —Lampert & Sons.

STEAMERS.

TODAY.

Vessel. From. Line.

Zaandam, Amsterdam, April 11. —Neth-Amer.

Panama, April 12. —Panama.

Port-au-Prince, April 18. —Royal Dutch.

St. Thomas, April 20. —Quaker.

La Bretagne, Havre, April 21. —French.

Antwerp, April 22. —Belgian.

Cherbourg, April 23. —Bordeaux.

MONDAY, APRIL 27.

Bremen, April 11. —N. G. Lloyd.

Hamburg, April 12. —Hamburg-American.

London, April 16. —All Trans.

Bolivia, April 17. —Gibraltar.

La Guaya, April 22. —Red D.

Peru, April 23. —Lampert & Sons.

TUESDAY, APRIL 28.

Vessel. From. Line.

Zaandam, Amsterdam, April 11. —Neth-Amer.

Port-au-Prince, April 18. —Royal Dutch.

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